

Interview with Karen McCluskey

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Program
Foreign Service Spouse Series

KAREN MCCLUSKEY

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi

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Q: This is Jewell Fenzi on July 30, 1992, and I am interviewing Karen McCluskey at the Spouse Oral History office, 1824 Sixteenth Street, NW. Karen has come today to talk about spouse issues, career development, leadership possibilities abroad, terrorism, rioting, a whole host of subjects.

I would like to know: would you explain to me what you're doing now and what you're doing at FSI [Foreign Service Institute] and OBC [Overseas Briefing Center] and work backward, or would you start in Istanbul and work forward? I'll leave that up to you.

MCCLUSKEY: Let's start with Istanbul and come forward. There's not as much to say with the older stuff —

Q: That's fine, because sometimes when we fill in on your background we find out what brought you to where you are today. I notice that in Istanbul you had terrorism, rioting, anti-Americanism. Was that in Nairobi as well?

MCCLUSKEY: We had a few terrorist problems when I was in Turkey, and we still do, of course, it's not unknown for that kind of problem. One that I personally experienced was in the covered bazaar that everyone loved to go to — everyone has a favorite copper or rug merchant — and I was in a copper merchant's little stall. Suddenly we heard a bunch of

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people yelling and machine gun fire almost exactly outside where we were. The merchant said, "Hit the floor," he turned off the lights and covered up with whatever. There was a terrorist out there and he shot as he went right by where we were, high above the stall; I don't think we'd have been hit if we'd been standing there but there were machine gun things above our stall. Then he disappeared and shot himself. It was one of those awful experiences. There was a lot of that in Turkey because it's a big center for drug trade, it has a couple of troubled borders, Kurdish problems; all kinds of things happen in Turkey to cause a terrorist problem. The Turks loved us. I sensed anti-Americanism somewhat more in Kenya.

Q: What did you do in Turkey? Could you work?

MCCLUSKEY: Yes. I actually arrived in Turkey thinking naively that I would be able to work on the local economy, I couldn't imagine why I wouldn't be able to do that. I had a business degree and was darned if I'd be stopped by anyone working on the local economy. Well, I was stopped by myself because I had no Turkish language skills of course. We found out very shortly before moving that we were going to Turkey, there was no time for language training. I barely had time to sell the car.

So after we arrived and interviewed with City Bank and a couple of other American businesses there, which politely told me, "Sorry — if you have no Turkish language skills, we can't use you, we have no place for you." So I went back to the Consulate in Istanbul and asked, "What can I do here?" And I got two jobs, actually — one that lasted the entire tour, which was a writer-researcher job which I loved.

Q: Wonderful — how did that happen to be there?

MCCLUSKEY: It actually was created for me. There was a need and I had the skills and they were able to finagle creation of the job.

Q: What kind of research writing were you doing?

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MCCLUSKEY: Some political stuff. I did take language classes and by the end I was translating Turkish newspapers into English to support the reports we were sending back to Washington. It was great. I also edited the reports the Political Officers were writing. Which is wher(she laughs)I learned about egos and writing — which is why I understood why your neighbor would ask you that first, because I had some experiences; as all editors do, I think. During the last of our three years there I held the CLO job concurrently with the administrative writer/researcher job.

Q: Fantastic! Part-time CLO?

MCCLUSKEY: But what I learned was that there's no such thing as two part-time jobs, you have two full-time jobs. You make yourself crazy. I also went to evening school for Turkish language, so I was pretty stressed out. But I loved it.

Q: But what a baptism of fire but it's better than not having anything to do.

MCCLUSKEY: Yes. I would have been very unhappy.

Q: You have a BS in Business Administration, and French?

MCCLUSKEY: I had a double major.

Q: Was that at the Sorbonne, or ... ?

MCCLUSKEY: My junior year of undergrad study was at the Sorbonne. During that year I also got what they call an “annual degree.”

Q: Where did you go to school?

MCCLUSKEY: Houghton College, a small college in New York State near the Pennsylvania border, in Houghton, New York. I went to the Sorbonne because I loved French, and I wanted to know what the world was about. I grew up in a small town, and

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Houghton is a very small college. In a small town the only thing it has is the gas station and the college, and now a pizza place I understand, but from one small environment to another, which was probably healthy in my younger days. But by my junior year of college I wanted to know what the world was like. That was one of the impetuses to get me overseas.

I always wanted to get into international business. That was a goal of mine even before going to France; it's why I chose those two majors, business and French together, hoping to land me a good international business job.

Q: When did you get your BS and MBA?

MCCLUSKEY: BS in 1980, and my MB(pause to recollect) must have been 1987, from an institution called U.S. International University, which is based in San Diego but my degree I got at a branch campus in Nairobi.

Q: It seems to me that you have done all the things that a spouse can do to keep ...

MCCLUSKEY: (laughing) I tried. I really tried to make the best of what for me was not always the most positive situation for a career-oriented woman.

Q: Evidently not but you've done a marvelous job of getting your advanced degree while you were in Kenya, and certainly learning how the Foreign Service operates right away in Istanbul. I learned more about how the Foreign Service operates the two years I was CLO in Trinidad than I did the other 28 when I was a spouse. And also, as you said, editing, working with some of the Officers whose purple prose you were "toying with" gave you an insight into the incredible — (both laugh) Exactly! Well, that's very interesting to know. So the BS was from Houghton College, the degr# annuel is from the Sorbonne, and the MBA from the International University based in San Diego which you did in Nairobi.

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MCCLUSKEY: They had no requirements of a semester at San Diego, I could do all of my studies in Nairobi and be granted the degree — which was great, that was a wonderful experience in itself, but I won't deviate into that. I always wanted to get into international business, an inner drive for some reason with me; then at the Sorbonne with the person who's now my husband: we both had a goal of getting overseas again as fast as we could and we both tried to work toward that. He did it first by getting into the Foreign Service, so I went with him.

Q: If you'd gotten it first, he'd have gone with you?

MCCLUSKEY: (laughing) I don't know. He said he would have. I'm not so sure, I think it would have been hard for him.

Q: You probably would have been dividing career time in that case.

MCCLUSKEY: Yes. We kind of have done that anyway; we'll get to that.

Q: So in Nairobi you studied, mainly. Or did you ... ?

MCCLUSKEY: I worked and studied. After working hours I went to night school to get my MBA.

Q: Was the night school on your own at home, or ... ?

MCCLUSKEY: No, that was at the University for my MBA.

Q: Oh: so you could go to the University in Kenya and work through this program? (Karen confirms) I see.

MCCLUSKEY: I did Saturday and evening courses there, which most of them were. There are many MBA programs that focus on evening study courses, so it worked out fine. I worked at the Embassy in Nairobi also. Before we arrived I wrote to the Commercial

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Attach# saying, "I want to work, can I work on the local economy? Can I work in the Embassy? Do you know of opportunities that would be appropriate for someone who wants to focus on business?" Which, again, I keep coming back to. He replied almost right away, saying, "I've got a job, I want you to work for me! You'll have to interview when you get here but it sounds like your background would be a nice match." And to make a long story short, I got that job.

Then there was that Gramm-Rudman-Hollings whatever-it-was came through and funding was cut in half for the whole office and my job was one of the ones that had to go. Luckily, the CLO job opened up at about the same time and I applied. There was a big panel interview, a whole lot of other great candidates applied, I knew it was not a sure thing at all, but I somehow managed to talk my way into it. Having been a CLO before was a big help, of course.

That was a very different job from the CLO job in Istanbul, which was more social. We did some workshops there on stress management, a few others. The focus in Istanbul was mor(pause to reflect) — we started an Alanon group because there was a need for that, for families of alcoholics. I built up the library there because there wasn't one and I felt it was needed. We did a few workshops but it was a small post; 50 families, something like that, and the pace was a little bit slower. Nairobi, in contrast, served 300 families. The CLO office was there, a huge AID contingent. We did a lot of workshops. I can't remember the exact number but we did a lot, on cross-cultural adjustment, families overseas, reentry, on finding a job in Kenya, volunteer opportunities, job search skills, all those kinds of things.

I held that job for just about the rest of our time — the first job for about seven months, and the CLO was a one-year contract; we were there two years. Then I finished off my schooling in the last couple of months when I wasn't working, which was great because I had to really work hard to get that MBA, which normally takes a lot longer than 1-1/2 years, the time I actually did it in. I graduated, then a week later we moved, so I really squeezed it in. (laughter)

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Q: I think it's interesting that you were CLO at both places, because when CLO was started, there was a stipulation that you had to be in the Foreign Service six years before you could ...

MCCLUSKEY: They changed that even before I left ...

Q: ... six months at post was the requirement.

MCCLUSKEY: It's not even a requirement, it's a recommendation.

Q: I, like you, stepped off the plane and walked into the CLO job in Trinidad.

MCCLUSKEY: There don't seem to be many stipulations any more.

Q: I'm impressed by all that you've managed to do at your first two posts.

MCCLUSKEY: This is interesting too but the MBA program is worth saying a couple of sentences about. It's where I really learned about cross-cultural adjustment and the fact that we Foreign Service families don't do it, really. I thought I had, in Turkey, I had Turkish friends, I was really comfortable there, I had wonderful friends in Turkey and really felt I had come to know the Turkish culture and acclimated to it but in reality, I was still buying things at the PX and I really hadn't.

Q: Except you said you were in the bazaar and you had your favorite copper man and your favorite rug man, so you did go ...

MCCLUSKEY: To some extent we learned the survival things but I think of women and men, mostly women that I've known who have married Turks or Austrians or Kenyans — those are the people who really have to do the cross-cultural adjustment in a big way.

Q: Of course, because they're "for life."

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MCCLUSKEY: Anti-Americanism I think I really experienced for the first time. I studied in Paris and I felt it there, I guess, and as a student I loved to debate with them and thought I was a big shot; just like all the Parisians love to debate those issues. But in the MBA program I had professors say to me, "We really hate what Reagan has just done, we wish America would jump into the ocean and not come out." Very directly in front of classes I would have instructors saying these things to me, so it was the first place I really had to learn how to respond to criticism of the United States.

Sometimes I handled it well and sometimes I didn't. When Reagan bombed Libya, that wasn't a very popular move in Nairobi; that was a hard one for me. But I had some of the best teachers I've ever had at this school, which to me was surprising, I didn't expect that. My best teachers ever were at the Sorbonne but a very close second was one particular teacher at USIU in Nairobi, who later turned out to be the head of the central bank in his own country, the Sudan, which is falling apart now. When I mention anti-Americanism that's where I felt it very strongly. There was a good reason for it. One of the greatest adjustment problems I had in Kenya was the fact that overnight I literally jumped from growing up in a poor family — if we were "middle class," we just crossed the line, there were nine children in my family. We didn't have a lot of money, it wasn't a big deal to us, but coming from that kind of background in my heart, to probably middle class as a newly married person who in the last few years married too rich — taking that lower middle class income to Kenya and then just overnight people looking up to me like I was some kind of goddess, wealthy, I could afford all these things. And it was true: from their perspective I was rich. I can see why they'd be anti-American because we looked so wealthy and greedy and whatever to them.

Q: Materialistic.

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MCCLUSKEY: Very much so compared with them. That's what I meant when I said anti-Americanism in Kenya. And I never acclimated to Kenyan life, it was my least favorite post because I never got into the culture.

Q: Well, because of the gap. It was the same in Sierra Leone, the gap, between ...

MCCLUSKEY: I couldn't reach over, I couldn't bridge it.

Q: I'm not sure you can.

MCCLUSKEY: And I didn't make the effort too, either, I have to admit. I was working fulltime and going to night school and I had to make choices. The choice that for me was very easy because there was this huge gap was "I won't assimilate to this culture."

Q: In Sierra Leone I wasn't working but I still felt that it was such an uphill battle ...

MCCLUSKEY: I felt the same way.

Q: ... and such a yawning chasm, and I was only there for a few years, so do something else. Absolutely.

MCCLUSKEY: I feel good about what I did in Nairobi, I can't complain because I certainly got a lot out of it personally, and I really do believe I made a contribution there to the post. I know some of the workshops are still being offered — ones that I started as the CLO working with the AWA [American Women's Association] there. I know they're continuing to offer those things. I feel like I made a contribution, I benefited so much from the experiences, they're what got me my next job in New York City. But it was a rough posting I have to say. I wasn't used to this stature that I was given.

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Q: Of course just going to Kenya as I did, for my 25th wedding anniversary, was wonderful — the bougainvillea and the blue skies and the puffy little clouds — (laughing) that's one of my very fondest memories!

MCCLUSKEY: Oh I loved that, and I miss the game parks and I miss the open expanses of land and the Massai, and I miss the tribes — I miss the Kikuyus.

Q: The exotica of Kenya.

MCCLUSKEY: Yes. There's a place of Kenya in me but it doesn't hold as great a place as Turkey does, for example, or even Austria.

Q: So then, after Kenya, what a change from Nairobi to New York. Was that with the UN?

MCCLUSKEY: My husband did a rotational assignment with Commerce but I was on my own again then, of course. It was interesting: I managed to parlay my CLO experiences into a training manager job at one of the largest banks in New York. It was through contacts and persistence and all that stuff you're taught to do in job search programs, and just plain old luck. And personality clicking with the interviewer.

Q: And you lived right in Manhattan?

MCCLUSKEY: I could walk to work, oh it was great, I loved it. I'm a city person as I said before, I love the pulse of the city, I just feel right at home. When we got to New York, which happened I should say — Tom was up for this big list nonsense that they go through every how many years, and they said “your choices are Washington, DC, New York, Washington, DC, New York. (laughter) These are your two options, you choose, which one do you like?”

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In part because I felt I had gone as far as I could in the system as a spouse — I didn't think I could get much more in terms of meaningful work in view of my goals for my life, and my background and where I thought my education had brought me.

Q: This is five years after you first went to Istanbul?

MCCLUSKEY: Yes. I really felt I'd reached a plateau with the Foreign Service book. What more could they do for me? Which is a selfish way to look at it but I wanted career progression and I couldn't see it happening going overseas to another foreign posting.

So, luckily, Tom was able to work out this New York job for himself, which was a good one, and we made it to New York. I of course hoped all along that I could pull him out of the Foreign Service in New York so that we could live there forever, but that didn't work out either. We also got pregnant, and that changed my view of New York in a big way.

Anyway, I sent out a bunch of letters when we got to New York, all to do with SIETAR, which is the Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research. I had been a member for a few years, I learned about it through the CLO job, you know you get all this paraphernalia when you're a CLO. I had a membership list, went through it, and identified maybe 50 people who were with companies I might be interested to work for. I sent them this general resume "just moved here from Nairobi, lived in Turkey before that, I love cross-cultural training, is there any opportunity here, I'd love to get to know New York too: call me, let's get together for lunch. If you know of a job, I'm enclosing my resume in case you do." My response rate to that was over 50 percent.

Q: Oh that's unusual!

MCCLUSKEY: It was just amazing to me. I don't think I'm a great writer but I hit the tone right or something, or they're not used to nice letters in New York, I don't know! (laughter) Anyway, I had a great response rate. One of them was from a woman who loved cross-cultural training also, she'd studied in Great Britain, she worked at Manufacturers

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Hanover Corporation. She said, “I really want to get together with you but can I share your resume with the management of Development section of the Corporate Training department? They're looking for a management training person.”

I said, “Sure, share it, let 'em know I'm here, call me in for an interview.” So one thing led to another. After a number of interviews, there must have been three or four, and a presentation that I had to make to a panel of the managers there, and I don't remember what else, I got the job. I was promoted in less than a year to a management slot in the Corporate Training department and just loved it, loved it, loved it.

And then Tom got Vienna. (she laughs) And that was a really hard decision, for both of us — harder for me for sure than for Tom.

Q: Because you really were on your way.

MCCLUSKEY: I really was, and “manny hanning,” which is what management at the bank is called for short, really focused my very haphazard experiences overseas into a very organized career, which was a great ... [tape halts, then resumes]

So we're in New York and where was I?

Q: You were promoted quickly, then Vienna.

MCCLUSKEY: It was a really tough decision. I had always wanted to have my own business, it was a goal, I knew some day I would and I didn't know when and I didn't think it was time yet, to be honest with you. I didn't have enough corporate experience yet to open my own business. I still feel that way, but I did it.

I decided — because we also got pregnant, finally, after years and years of trying. The pregnancy and the fact that I learned through lawyers, the CLO office, a couple of other people, that I could work as an independent contractor-consultant in Vienna — all those things together made me decide that it would be good. It was a fabulous promotion

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for Tom, there's no question it was a great move for him. It came at a bad time for me, because I was really taking off, and I now know if I'd stayed I'd have made it into an AV[assistant vice president] slot. You know, everything has a hierarchy, just like the Foreign Service. Anyway, I was giving up a lot in going and I knew that. I didn't know about AVP possibilities until after the fact when someone left and everything shifted and I was the next one for yet another promotion. But you know, you make your decisions. I decided that if I could make it in Vienna, pregnant, start a business and get clients, then I probably could do anything. So I decided to go.

So there I was. I stayed a little longer in New York after Tom left so that I could finish up some projects at work which were really important to me that they look good and that my ending there was a very positive one. So I arrived in Vienna four and a half months pregnant and showing already. Unlike most women who can go a long time, I didn't. (laughter) For some reason I was "out there."

I started German classes right away. I'd taken one in the evening after work, a short course at NYU [New York University], I had a little bit of German when I got to Vienna and I continued with two intensive courses as soon as I arrived. I thought, "get more 'cope,' and get more contracts" if I had some German skills, which was true I later found out. I called the lawyer and said, "I'll pay you, figure out what I need to do, I want to work on the local economy."

I had also been offered a contract with Morgan Guaranty in New York while I still there, to serve in their European office as a writer, to help them with some writing that they needed in London, in Madrid, Paris, and another location not Vienna. They were willing to pay me to fly and serve there.

Q: Sure, having you based in Europe was better than sending someone from here.

MCCLUSKEY: In fact, that didn't eventuate. Around the time I was moving they reorganized their mergers and acquisitions staff, the one I would have worked for in

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Europe, and shifted from a Paris-based to a London-based operation. Everything shifted and the key players I was in contact with moved, so it didn't work out. After hearing that they had to wait for the dust to settle I decided, well, that's a real clear message, I'll focus on local work; which I had already started to do.

To make a long story short, I got some wonderful contracts right away. It just took off, it took off. I think because I was a mystery, the people just couldn't believe that a pregnant American would want to do training programs and write for them, in Austria. "There must be something great behind this" I think they must have thought!(laughter)

Q: Mystery woman.

MCCLUSKEY: Yes. I really believe that's what got me a lot of the contracts.

Q: Dark shades and ...

MCCLUSKEY: I don't know what got them but they just really kept coming in. I remember one interview I had was on the day I was due; and it was my best contract the whole time I was there. It was my due date and my daughter was just taking her time and she wasn't going to be in a hurry, and I knew if anything happened I knew how to get to the hospital — I was very comfortable with the whole thing. But when I waddled in to talk with him, which of course I was doing at nine or nine and a half months or whatever it was, the interviewer looked at my stomach, but he just smiled slightly and I thought, "I've got to say something about this, I can't just ignore it." I said, "Well, you can see I'm pregnant ..." (both breaking up laughing) He said, "I see that, when are you due? Any minute??" I said, "Today," and his eyes just got really big and I said, "Don't worry, I think she's going to take her time. I don't think she'll be here for a while."

He just laughed, and it set a wonderful tone for that meeting and I got great contracts from that organization. They knew I had a baby, they didn't care, they were ready to move forward. Megan was born a week and a half later, so it turned out not to be a problem.

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Q: And you got good help in Vienna to take care of her?

MCCLUSKEY: Yes. I hired an Indian woman to take care of her who knew a whole lot more about children than I ever did, even though I grew up in a big family. She sure knew about babies in a way that I never learned. She came to our home three days a week initially, then it grew from there and she took care of Megan when I was working. Often I was working there in the house because I was doing a lot of writing — magazine articles for us and magazines ...

Q: But to have her ...

MCCLUSKEY: And not have to worry about interruptions. It turned out beautifully. And I miss Sumi so much. So business just took off there. And I loved Austria, I thought it was a wonderful country. I also taught at two universities there, one a St. Louis-based university, Western University, and the other the Austrian school of tourism based in Vienna. I taught human resource management(interference from automobile noise)I had a wonderful experience. Plus, Megan was born in Austria, which will always have a special place ...

Q: I think it's just amazing all that you've done.

MCCLUSKEY: I don't know if you wanted to focus on careers.

Q: Yes, of course, absolutely. Because, as I said, you're the final chapter of the book, really. To read the earliest accounts that we have, and to read your account — it's going to be a contrast un-believable.

MCCLUSKEY: I'm a real-life example. I know many women who've done similar things, who have focused on career and made it work. Somehow, in the Foreign Service ...

Q: With able assistance, make the system work for you. Absolutely.

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MCCLUSKEY: I have to say, in Austria I got a lot of resistance.(pause) I don't know how much of this should go on the record — should I be careful what I say?

Q: No, I think this is valuable, and if we use this, we would take it out of context and use it in a generic way, without your name, because there is resistance to spouse employment. When I send you your transcript for editing, all you have to do is highlight that and say, "Don't use this in connection with my name." I would prefer it that way.

MCCLUSKEY: I will tell you, then: When I arrived at post I was flatly told I was not allowed to do what I was going to do.

Q: By whom?

MCCLUSKEY: By different people in the Embassy. Most notably the CLO, telling me I should be a secretary. As a former CLO I was just flabbergasted that a CLO would ever say that to someone who wanted a career, had a lot of energy and was obviously committed to this effort. I just couldn't believe that today a CLO would ever say that.

Q: Could that have been some envy on her part?

MCCLUSKEY: No, I don't think so. She had skills I never dreamed of having, as a CLO — I mean, she could manipulate information in that computer brain of hers and keep data for years and years; just amazing what she knew. She was a wonderful resource person for me once we got over this huge initial obstacle. She was the biggest one. I got wonderful support from the personnel officer, though, a woman, who said, "Go for it!" Oh definitely, she's a college lawyer, do it. I wasn't told directly but I know that the Admin Officer was not really pleased with the effort I was putting into it, either. He never said that to me directly: that definitely should not be quoted anywhere, because I got it from the CLO, who was clearly against my pursuing what I wanted to pursue.

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Q: But you were never told, as was a woman at one of my posts, that she was to keep away from the Foreign Office, she was not to go over there any more in her job search with the local officials.

MCCLUSKEY: I was never told to stop. I was told I shouldn't be doing it. I was also told it was not possible. A lot of people told me "You can't do it, it's never been done before" was the reason, and I laugh whenever I hear that kind of language. Because in Nairobi one of the great lessons I learned from other women who had done this was, "never believe the naysayers." They might be right, but there's a good chance they're not. Because people pass on "you can't do it, you can't do it" from generations of spouse to generations, without ever questioning or trying, because the effort to try is so great that they don't.

They don't — and for good reason. It took a lot of effort to make it work in Austria, and there's a good reason why women — or men, there are more and more men in the situation, too — continue to pass on the word that it's not possible, you can't do it, it is not possible. "No one will hire you if you're pregnant," I was told also, because there was a great prejudice against pregnant women in business who were employees because they got two years off. That was clear to me, but I was very clear with my clients in our first meeting that I was a contractor, not an employee, and as a Diplomatic connection I was not entitled to that leave. I had to be very clear about that to overcome ...

Q: And I thought I'd take it anyway because that would be the end of my tour, when I don't have two years.

MCCLUSKEY: And I wanted to work, I didn't want to be at home, that wasn't the choice I was making, that's not why I started a business there. Anyway, it took a little bit, and there were a lot of naysayers, a whole lot, including my husband I have to admit, who said, "You're making waves, don't do this." I wanted to pay taxes in Austria, he said, "Don't! Nobody else is — why are you doing this? Why are you creating these waves?" And I said,

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“Because I want my business to grow and I want it to be internationally successful some day, and I don't want anything to ever come back to me.”

So I pursued it anyway despite the resistance I got at home and in the Embassy. I went for it anyway. I hired an accountant, I hired a lawyer and said, “Make it work for me, please, I don't care — what do I pay you for that? Just tell me.” And they told me and it was reasonable in my opinion, and so we moved from there. And I could move forward very comfortable knowing that I was working legally and paying taxes and that no one could ever complain about my rights to work in Austria.

Q: You never used your Diplomatic passport as a wedge anywhere?

MCCLUSKEY: I wasn't really allowed to.

Q: I was hoping that you'd say, “No I didn't”

MCCLUSKEY: The cost to me was giving up my immunity, which was a big cost. That's why I got so much resistance from people. Which is something to be concerned about, though.

Q: Sure.

MCCLUSKEY: It is, it is, there's no question. But I wasn't planning to do anything — obviously nothing illegal.

Q: You hired an attorney so you knew that you were above-board on everything.

MCCLUSKEY: Yes. And I had absolutely no interest in doing anything under the table or anything even remotely close to it, because I wanted to start a good reputation that would continue year after year after year. I wanted to be “clean,” so giving up my immunity I knew was a really big deal.

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Q: How does one give up one's immunity? Do you sign something or ...

MCCLUSKEY: No, the lawyer sent me in writing, which was wonderful, a letter confirming my right to work, stating the taxes I would have to pay, putting all of this in one letter and telling me I would be giving up my immunity. So it was in writing. There's nothing you do, nothing you sign, it's just if you get caught doing something wrong ...

Q: The Embassy isn't going to bail you out.

MCCLUSKEY: They may, but they have no obligation to do so. And the local government has a right to sue you or something like that. You're giving up your diplomatic protection, in other words. And I was willing to do that to be able to do this business.

Q: As far as the Embassy was concerned, if everyone had to be evacuated, they wouldn't leave you behind but ... (overlapping voices)

MCCLUSKEY: The immunity was only given up during the hours I was working. So when I was at home or if there were an evacuation, I did have the protection. While I was working I did not carry Diplomatic immunity.

Q: Keep your cake!

MCCLUSKEY: You can do that. There was one case where I did use the Embassy's services because I couldn't get through the Austrian Government red tape. In fact it was just a phone call that they made for me. At the school of tourism where I was teaching the Austrian Ministry of Education — it has another name but that's what it is — came to the school and said, "Wait: does she have the right to work here?" I showed them the letter and they said, "No, you're not registered in this country." Well, of course I was but I came with a Diplomatic red ID card so I wasn't on their black card or whatever the normal system is, so they said, "No, she's not registered here." They didn't even check.

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I went back three or four times and said, “Look at the Diplomatic list, I’m on it!” “No.” It was like some numskull GS-2 or -1 level person saying, “I’m told to do one, two, three” and they didn’t have the ability for some reason to go off this list. So after three or four times getting the school to try for me, I said, “I’m calling the Embassy to see if they can do anything.” Of course they knew people there, they made one phone call, the red list was checked, of course I was on it, the problem was ended. I did have to send a letter confirming the Embassy’s conversation with them, covering everything, but I was happy to do that.

It was a lot of hassle, getting all that to work out, but I have to say it felt really good to do it and to be able to say to all the naysayers who said it was impossible, to be very successful, legally successful in a country where I was told I’d never be able to it. It was a wonderful feeling. And the best part about it was, I know of a couple of cases after me who were then able to do the same thing in a much easier way than I did.

Q: Yes, because you paved the way.

MCCLUSKEY: Yes. I really felt like I’d done all the groundwork for them, made it possible for them to simply send the right letter to the right person and it was finished. They didn’t have to go through the six calls and getting the school and getting the Embassy — they just did it and it was finished. I turned a lot of my contracts over to one of these people.

Q: I was going to ask you what happened to your business when you left.

MCCLUSKEY: It was such a time... I turned over my clients to one person in whom I have great trust, I know she’s doing a great job with all of them. But it was really hard, because to market your services and get the client base up takes time. It took a shorter time there than it has here because they make an honest thing about me or whatever it was they made people hire me. But it still took six months out of a two-year tour, and I dope them up and they were calling me up for second or third workshops, magazine articles or whatever.

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And then it was time to leave. I wanted to stay longer but after a lot of discussion we made a family discussion that we would come back. It certainly paid off for me to come back but it was a hard decision. I didn't close my business, I wasn't working under the Global Training Associates, which was how I registered after arriving in the DC area but I turned over my clients to another person and she's making the big bucks now! (laughter) Because the reputation is getting on — which is great, I mean it's still a good feeling to me and I'm happy.

Q: That you did it.

MCCLUSKEY: Yes, and that I set it up and made it possible for her to work well and happily and she's overwhelmed with work and now subcontracting for others who are also able to do this now because of the ground-paving I did.

Q: So you really are under contract now to the Overseas Briefing Center or to the Foreign Service Institute?

MCCLUSKEY: Yes, I bid on contracts, and I win or lose. That's what I'm doing now. But I have other clients now, OBC is just one. I'm happy to say that because I don't want to focus on only one client. Their budget goes, my budget goes, and they don't [call back].

When I came back I turned over all my clients to this woman, Janet; came back here and registered my business — figured out a name, did all that licensing stuff that you have to do and converted part of my basement into an office. And then went to the people I knew, which is what I'd done in all my previous places, went to the people I knew and asked for names and then branched out. That's what I did here.

I started at FSI because I knew their system. I'd been given some names at OBC, and before leaving I of course got all the names I possibly could in Austria before coming back, then started pursuing them, and OBC was my first client. They called me within a month I had a one-day program with them. It was with MQ-100 as a matter of fact. I wasn't

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the facilitator, I was a guest speaker, like you do now. One thing led to another, I got bid requests, won bids, and ... (auto noise again) location contracts for them.

That's worked out really well, and that reputation plus my reputation in New York, the references that I have from that, have gotten me other clients. Cancer Information Service is one of my major ones now, it's part of the National Institutes of Health, I think. They have a funny relationship with some dotted line into the National Cancer — I don't remember the exact name. That's a big client I got because of some other contacts but to get it I needed references and one of my references wa(auto noise) ... plus my manager in New York. I had some Austrian ones too but no one ever calls Austria! And other clients too, so I just started with the people I knew and am now marketing way behind but am making the references to make that ...

Q: Okay, it's now 1992 and your husband's been in the Service for, what, 10 years? (K. confirms) And you said you'd like to stay here?

MCCLUSKEY: Yes. I don't want to build a client base and say goodbye again.

Q: Then what happens?

MCCLUSKEY: That's a good question. My husband has been out of Washington for almost 10 years, so he has the right to stay five years I hope. I don't know what's going to happen, I'm not sure. Obviously at some point he has to go back out again. We're hoping it can wait until close to retirement. That's how long I'd love to stay. So is he.

Q: How long is he planning to stay in?

MCCLUSKEY: Oh I don't know, but years away, we want this to be years away. Also for our daughter. I know it's easier to move when they're younger rather than older. There are some posts I would consider messing up my business, for which is what I see it as, you know — destroying my client base again. I think that's a very practical and realistic way to

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look at it because that's exactly what one's doing: cutting your ties with people. If he got Tokyo I would go. There are certain locations I would certainly consider where you could move right in and I could get them to work and ...

Q: Become international.

MCCLUSKEY: Yes, though we're not already international. But yes, I had an office in Austria, in DC, maybe in Tokyo; Paris is another one I'd consider.

Q: Do you get a percentage from the Vienna office from your ...

MCCLUSKEY: No. If only I'd thought of something like that. You know, I was so naive. I didn't do that.

That's how I learned. You know, you make mistakes, and you learn. I wish I was getting a percentage, I could sure use the cash to build my client base here.

Q: Especially in the Washington area. [End of side, A of tape 1; Begin side B, tape 1]

(mid-sentence) ... would have been better if we hadn't moved; I think I would be a VP right now in some major corporation. I don't mean this to sound like bragging but I have a lot of energy and I went to night school, worked two jobs and all that stuff.

Q: Studied languages.

MCCLUSKEY: And did all this. I just have a lot of commitment and a lot of energy that I want to put to use somewhere. I think I probably would have been better off not moving every couple of years or three years or whatever. Would I be doing cross-cultural work? Probably not. I have a real deep commitment to the importance of American companies focusing more on cross-cultural issues. So the bottom line is, am I better off? I have a wonderful marriage and that's going great. And a beautiful daughter. I have some wonderful experiences overseas to draw from that have nothing to do with work and some

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that do. Would I have those things? No. And that's a big thing to give up. So I probably am better off having gone over, but strictly from a career perspective there is definitely a cost.

Q: Have you thought of taking in a partner here and having the partner carry on while you go ...

MCCLUSKEY: Keep the name.

Q: Yes, while you go ...

MCCLUSKEY: Ah, isn't that a smart thing to do. I'll have to looat it.

Q: That's what I would do. And it would seem to me that your base should be here rather than in Vienna. The other possibility of course would be to become an Economic Officer or Commercial Officer and become a tandem [couple].

MCCLUSKEY: (in lackluster voice) Ye-e-e-s.

Q: For 15 years or something like that.

MCCLUSKEY: No, my love is in business, so it's not in government work. I don't have the commitment. I think you've got to have a certain commitment t(laughing) make America a better place to live and take our culture out — you have to have that deep commitment to make it as a Foreign Service Officer, in my opinion, to be successful. There are plenty who don't have it and who are successful but I don't have that.

I have a commitment to bringing some American business practices overseas and training other countries in how that might work for them, and picking up some skills from them and bringing them back here and saying, "Wait a minute, but this is how they do it in Austria, don't you think that might work here? Can't we slow down just a little bit and think esthetics and think about some of these other things that we never consider in the United States?" That I have a real commitment. Government work? No. I like the pulse of

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business, I like the fact that I could get fired any minute, I like that challenge. I don't want the ... (laughing) of protecting mediocrity, in other words. If I'm not good in my business, my business falls.

Q: Let me just say that I really feel that, since you've taken over the Intro to the Foreign Service at the Institute, it is much better managed, much more focused.

MCCLUSKEY: Really?

Q: Oh yes.

MCCLUSKEY: I don't have a sense of that because I don't know what to compare it with.

Q: I feel the whole course seems to be under control, your introduction is better.

MCCLUSKEY: I really like that course. This is why I love training — I really do believe that people who go through these programs walk out with something they didn't have before. And this course, I would have loved to have had before going to Istanbul! But as I said before, I didn't have time for anything before Istanbul, it was something like a scant three months to get ready to go. And I'd just been promoted at work in Washington — I was working for a lobbyist then — a Greek lobbyist. (laughing) When he heard I was going to Turkey he gave me all these warning— “you'll like them but you know, they're devious.”

Q: I certainly feel that you are the wave of the future.

MCCLUSKEY: I'm meeting a lot of women like me.

Q: And I don't think that the State Department is quite where you are, yet.

MCCLUSKEY: No: I think you're right, and I think it's a slow process because we're talking about a big organization. I used to say “because we're talking about government” but I

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now know, after working in a bank, it's a function of size and not of government versus business, though government adds a few problems. Especially firing problems.

Q: Or not firing problems.

MCCLUSKEY: FLO is trying to do some things — fast-train; they've got some such programs but they're not appropriate for some of us — to take a management trainer and put her in a fas— you know, it's like we're already too far — one spouse, Joanne Grady, entered the Foreign Service with her husband at a much older age than we used to; I was 23 or something when we entered, and obviously what career did I have at that point? I had a Business degree and a lot of energy but I didn't have a focused career like I do now. She entered after having a focused career and the idea of giving that up and saying goodbye to friends and family and all — she just finds it an astonishing requirement.

Q: Let me ask you something else... I'm always amazed, when I sit in occasionally on some of the other courses at FSI simply because I want to know what they're telling people because I don't want to tell them something too far off base, I find that they're running a very traditional spouse training organization.

MCCLUSKEY: In what way?

Q: Well, that you can expect to volunteer, you can expect to move every few months; they don't focus on — have they taken on a different tone recently?

MCCLUSKEY: Well, with me, because what I present is not — I do say there's a lot of opportunity for volunteering overseas. I did volunteering, there's all kinds of stuff — I ran a pressroom for a major conference. The MQ-100 had changed tone, at least in the year that I've been doing it, because I'm very up front with people about the difficulties of work. I have a lot of [spouses] talk to me on breaks and after the program about employment possibilities, it is a major concern. FLO and OBC both recognize that and they're trying to give people skills. I think they're doing some great things, actually, but the effective training

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skills program that they offer I think is a really good idea. One of the reasons they offer that is to give spouses marketable skills that transfer from one country to another. I can do training in Paris, I can do it in Australia, in Tokyo; it is very easily transferable but you have to make a lot of adjustments — I'm not trying to say that you can just take what you do in a course here and try to do that in Tokyo — no.

Q: You have to learn a lot of the cultural niceties and nuances.

MCCLUSKEY: But the core training skills, the projection, the delivery skills, the design skills, are transferable, the basics are transferable. You need those whatever group you're talking to — how you get your point across is what changes from culture to culture. I see change happening. But they're not caught up yet, you still have to use innovation and creativity when you go overseas. If you hope to start a business, start to create a volunteer organization for orphans, if you have what I consider to be high goals, what I consider to be pretty high goals, then you're going to have to use your own abilities to make that happen. You can't depend on ...

Q: I was going to say Dr. Slany the Department of State Historian whom I've talked to a couple of times, says that the State Department is always playing catchup.

MCCLUSKEY: We're a big organization.

Q: Well, there must be a certain amount of inertia in something of that — it takes something like this to work its way through. But I'm very interested that you really seem to have no obligations to the Foreign Service as a spouse.

MCCLUSKEY: Should I? (laughter)Q: I don't think so, in this day and age. We were constantly told “you're given a house, you're given a Diplomatic passport, you're ...”

MCCLUSKEY: I'm saying goodbye to clients — you want to do a balance sheet, I'll do a balance sheet for you, we'll see which way it goes. For me ...

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Q: And there must be a lot of women of your generation who feel that way.

MCCLUSKEY: I think so. I will say I've changed a lot. I started out — in Istanbul I gave up the job with the lobbyist, I'd just gotten a big promotion, from a money standpoint I was making, let's say, more than my husband. And I knew I could continue to move. I didn't really like what I was doing, though, the day-to-day stuff — what you do with Congress and all that, I didn't really love it too much. Calling in chits: "Remember we did that for you, well, there's a vote coming up, we'd like you to vote this ..." I had some ethical difficulties with what we were trying to do. I sure did learn a lot. But I arrived in Istanbul feeling I'd given up a lot, though, and was very resentful; I went kicking and screaming.

Q: But being very positive in ...

MCCLUSKEY: Well, I wasn't going to let it get the best of me, I don't know if I was very positive, but I felt like I would be damned if I was going to let them hurt my career; that's how I felt. And my tone, I have to say, has changed quite a bit, because I think it's almost unfair — I hear new Foreign Service spouses complaining about how the system is not helping them get jobs, and I think, "If you're in the States, who helps you get a job? You get it on your own."

Where do you get that in your life? Do you ever get that? I think there are some complaints that are unjustified. I started out very resentful that I'd given up so much, and I think that's a very healthy response to giving up a pretty good job, and leaving Manny Hanny giving up a very good career and with very clear promotion dangling in front of my nose. There is a certain amount of resentment that is natural, even though it's your choice too — and I really felt it was my choice too, it wasn't my husband saying "you will go or else," because separation from your husband is a choice. It wasn't just to avoid separation, it was thinking "how can I make it work," jumping to solving the problem rather than focusing on it per se.

I feel the bitterness is unjustified, that it's a waste of energy.

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Q: I would say it's a waste of energy.

MCCLUSKEY: And take that energy and move it forward, let's make it happen, let's pave a road for someone else, make it work for us and then make it possible for other people, so that all these naysayers can shut u(laughing) stop saying no, say "Karen did it, you can do it, here's what you have to do." I do agree that more support has to be in place for spouses who want to do what I did.

Facing all this naysaying at the beginning was rough. I was very clear about my goal. I had hired the lawyer and the accountant, so I knew I had the guns behind me, I could rest in that security. But having people at the Embassy tell me "you really shouldn't be doing what you're doing" and there was a need there, would never change my mind but it certainly added another level of stress to someone trying to start a business; and all the stresses involved in being a new person, and having to cold-call all over and the stresses involved in that stuff. I do think there needs to be a little bit more support from that perspective to help make it happen more easily.

Q: Have you seen that there are what I would call the "traditional" women who don't work, who stay home with their children.

MCCLUSKEY: And are very happy with them, and I don't judge them, some of my best friends ...

Q: They're doing the cookies and hotdogs and things for CLO picnics and such things, there should be some sort of compensation for what those women are doing. Because they're doing the "traditional" Foreign Service work. What is your feeling ... ?

MCCLUSKEY: I guess I heard different degrees of that in different locations. I'm trying to remember. In Istanbul there were enough traditional spouses there that there were a few who were barking about the fact that you were expecting them to something festive and

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ridiculous — they were the ones, as you say, who have the '72 Directive right here on their shoulders and carry it around with them all the time, or at that point were doing so.

I'm trying to think of Austria ... It was such a big post, and Kenya was large — not as large as Vienna but there were enough people who were willing and happy, happy to make those contributions that I didn't hear a lot of grumbling. I knew there were groups who grumbled but I was too busy — I had some wonderful friends and I think you have to be careful — I tend to become what people around me are like and then I have a terrible habit of mimicking people without realizing — I go to Canada, I start sounding Canadian, I go to upstate New York where I'm from, my upstate New York accent comes back. I think all of us have that tendency to some degree, I think mine is more pronounced than others' but because mine's more pronounced I do find I shy away from people who spend most of their time complaining. I know they were there but I guess I didn't know them well enough, and chose not to know them well enough, to hear their complaints. Because, again, I found it to be a waste of energy.

So, don't make the cookies, there's 50 billion people here who're willing to do it, so what are you complaining about, they're happy, leave them alone, they're doing great. I guess there is a contingent out there who is busy complaining about the fact that these people are making cookies and contributing in that way. I did volunteer things, I started my business but I still baked cookies occasionally, I did free workshops for people sometimes, and that's a [big] contribution. I managed a pressroom for a big international conference for FAWCO — Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas. They had their conference a year or so ago in Indiana, so we had a group from AWA (American Women's Associates, in Vienna) there who did all sorts of behind-the-scenes things. I helped manage the pressroom, that was free, and that involved a lot of time week after week after week; that was a huge contribution. I also helped organize their workshop for it, again another big contribution.

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I guess I did that happily. However, I would not help with CODELS. If I were to do that I'd want money for that kind of work because that was such a painful experience. I did it as a CLO, obviously obligatory but I found it very painful, demanding; we "owe" them something. (she laughs) "No, I don't think I'll do this any more." "Why don't you bake cookies?" "Do I think there should be compensation? I think there are people out there saying there should be but I think there are still enough women young — not just older women, people younger than me, I'm 34 now, there are women younger than me who are happy to be at home, and I think it is a valid choice and a healthy one. It's not one that I'd make, but I think mine's valid, but theirs is valid too. They're at home and they're happy to do that, and I think there are still enough — in the post I was at, anyway — that the complainers become kind of moot because there are still the volunteers who are happy to take the CODELS out and who love it, who enjoy it.

Q: I talked recently to a male spouse who said he thought — and he's male, spouse of a non-career ambassador — and he's very impressed with the quality of Foreign Service people, and he said he really felt that spouses should be compensated, perhaps on contract basis, QUOTE for anything that they wouldn't do otherwise at home QUOTE, such as CODELS.

MCCLUSKEY: That makes good sense, because you know I would have volunteered — the fact that I was connected with the Foreign Service had nothing to do with the FAWCO pressroom work that I did, I would have done that anyway. So that's not a bad rule.

Q: I think this is very, very interesting, because your attitude is very positive but I would also call you a little bit removed from the Service, in a way. Maybe that's because you're here in Washington now.

MCCLUSKEY: No. I was removed overseas, too. In Istanbul I was very "in" the Service, I guess — the experience was new, I was getting to know it, and in Nairobi I made a conscious choice to remove myself. I was still close, I was obviously in it but in terms of

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socialization and a feeling of obligation to go to certain parties and so on, I didn't go, Tom went on his own often. I knew there was a cost to that and I didn't care, to be honest. That's my choice.

Q: And he doesn't?

MCCLUSKEY: He cared a little bit but not too much. I said, "Would you do it for me?" That's the way I'd always put it. "I have a business meeting I want to go to, it sure would help me if you'd go. You want to come?" He'd never come, so there wasn't much of an argument there. It would be stressful for him to come to that, he wouldn't know anybody, his business contacts, a sort of strange environment to it. The same for me going to some of these cocktail parties where all these diplomats might be, and I don't know anyone, why would I be comfortable there.

Q: Do you think you're a minority or do you think you're the wave of the future as far as ...

MCCLUSKEY: Definitely a minority. There were a handful of women in Vienna like me, and it's a huge post, I don't know how many people are there. I asked the Personnel office, they would never tell me for some bizarre reason.

Q: Do you think you generate any envy among the women who haven't been able to ...

MCCLUSKEY: I think there were women really angry at me. Yes, I know there were in Kenya, there's no question about it, they told me. You know, I really try to make friends with them though, I guess, in a way, I want them to know I'm supporting them and I'm not doing anything to step on them; if they want to join, hey! co-train with me. "You want some trainees today? Come with me." And I did that a couple of times. "Well, come on — you want to do it, then do it, do it, just come with me and be with me and don't be against me."

But I know there were still women who probably weren't very happy with me. I was making waves, I was creating a new way of work, a new way of thinking; and I knew it.

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Q: But I think it's the wave of the future.

MCCLUSKEY: I don't know how they can avoid it. The Foreign Service Officer is getting older and older when he or she enters, and there are more and more female Foreign Service Officers married and entering the Service. But I don't know what the average is now, but ...

Q: I think it's around 31, something like that.

MCCLUSKEY: And by 31 most people have got past the accounting jobs and secretary jobs and by now they've developed a career of some kind. So it's got to be a question that's going to get worse and worse. I don't know how they can avoid dealing with it in some way.

Q: And there's no real general answer to it. It has to be almost thought of on a post by post, person by person basis.

MCCLUSKEY: There are some general things they could be doing. For example, in Vienna they don't "owe" this to anyone, I don't think they owe it but I don't think they'll keep Foreign Service Officers if they don't make the change. Because the spouse is going to leave and possibly the Foreign Service Officer too.

Q: The last time I had a contact in Personnel he said that the basic reason for attrition — he was working with young officers — was spouses' discontent.

MCCLUSKEY: Oh, there's a great study tha[trying to recall a name]she's really well-known in cross-cultural circles ... she's in Utah I believe. She did a study of international businesses that send managers overseas and the number one reason that those people come home early is a spouse's inability to adapt to this [life style]. That's the number one reason. Number two is the employee's inability, and number three is other family reasons — children.

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So I'm not surprised to hear that the number one attrition reason is spouse discontent.

Q: That was several years ago but I doubt that it's changed.

MCCLUSKEY: I can't imagine that it has.

Q: He was working, I believe, with young and mid-career Officers. He said it was amazing the spouses wh(laughing) would call up saying the husband hadn't discussed with them where they were going, and would say, "I don't WANT to go there!"

MCCLUSKEY: The loss of control that every human reacts to — they say the greatest stress is when you feel you have the least control. And that's why among secretaries and administrative assistants the stress level tends to be even higher than even among high executives — they have this level of control and the secretary gets commands from a bunch of people.

Q: My husband has always said that he thinks the pay scale in the United States is wrong, he feels that the people who do the mundane work, like secretaries, (laughing)they're the ones who deserve the biggest salaries!

MCCLUSKEY: To compensate for the stress.

Q: Yes. I shudder when I think what they pay people to do data entry, because if they're bored and uneducated and sitting there and typing errors into the system, and once they're in it's so hard to get them out. I sometimes wonder how much MISinformation is floating around the world these days.

MCCLUSKEY: It's just knocked me for a loop. I don't know whether I should believe them or not.

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Q: Because the people who are doing the basic grunt work aren't interested in what they're doing, aren't being paid anything, and don't really care at all what the results are.

MCCLUSKEY: That's true. I think that one of the general things the Foreign Service should do for their own sake — and, again, they don't “owe” anyone this — to combat this attrition rate or that of people leaving short of tour and the great cost that involves, would be to have the CLO or Personnel Officer, as part of their job requirement, do some of the research for the many, many spouses who want to work on the local economy.

It's supposedly part of the CLOs' job. When they do their semi-annual dependent employment report, they're supposed to answer the question — I remember from my CLO days — “Is anyone working on the local economy? Is it possible?” But I don't think many CLOs really talk to a lawyer and find out if in fact it is legal. They go by what spouses have done. I think it should be more organized, so that when I arrive in Austria I have the ability to go to the CLO, whose job is in part to help with employment issues of spouses. I do believe that CLO should be able to say to me, either in response to her efforts of those of the Personnel office, yes, you can work on the local economy if you are in these fields. If you're in these other fields you'll have trouble but you can become licensed by going through a German language exam or certification procedure or go to school for a year — if you're willing to do that, yes you can. I think they should put effort into that, and that would open up a whole new round of possibilities for spouses. They'd still have to do the work.

Q: Which you have to do anyway.

MCCLUSKEY: Nobody “owes” you that.

Q: The CLO just doesn't go with the same intensity as you are. You know how busy you are with other things. I think you're wonderful, you keep saying they have no obligation — does the Foreign Service have any obligation to spouses? What obligation do they have to spouses, since the spouse, thanks to the '72 Directive, really has no obligation to them?

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MCCLUSKEY: I think that unlike a lot of spouses I've talked to, who don't really ever come out and say "they owe me a meaningful job," they might just as well say that, with the complaints that come up.

Q: Which they don't, in my book.

MCCLUSKEY: They don't in my book either. You get a job and you make a career because of your own efforts, not because of anything anyone gives you. It's so American of me to say that but I really do believe, for Americans, that is the way life goes.

Q: And it's your choice to accompany your husband abroad too.

MCCLUSKEY: That's the point I made in a workshop in Vienna. It was a job search program, we were doing interviewing skills and resume writing, and I think it was in the latter part, and again — I think it was the same CLO I mentioned before — we were discussing what your career goals are. I tried to get them to think not in terms of limitations for the first step, then to come back to the parameters within which we have to work, and then how can you make this goal of yours to become a trainer, (or whatever it might be) how can you make that work in this setting? [How can you make it] fit it. You can at least take this step toward that goal and not feel you're giving up the whole thing.

That I think is a very realistic way to make a career work in the Foreign Service. Somehow it came out that one of the participants said — I had made some comment about it being "your choice, what do you mean" and someone else had said, "what do you mean, we don't have a choice, we came here with our husbands, we're following our husbands' careers" — it was all women — no, it wasn't, the person did say husbands — and there was one man in the group, an employee who came, (she laughs) he wanted to leave. I thought it was interesting he had the guts to come! (laughter)

Anyway, one woman in the class said, "well, we're just 'following our husbands,' what do you mean 'goal,' we don't really get that. We're just going to get jerked around anyway."

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And I said, "Well, in fact it is your choice every time you move. It's your choice as much as anyone else's." And then this person at the back of the room chimed in, "NO, NO!" You know, we're supposed to be "just following our husbands," it's not really — you don't get a say, you don't have the right to get a vote in this process." So there's a reaction to that, but my personal belief is yes, we are making choices, it is our choice to stay with the Foreign Service or not, to keep our marriage intact and to go [to post] or commute from [Washington].

Q: Or to separate in tours.

MCCLUSKEY: It's hard to say, that it is an option. I've seen one or two situations where if you're willing to commute for, say, a long weekend, it can be done.

Q: No but Bermuda, Bahamas, Trinidad, Curacao, Recife — those are really all possibilities; Montreal, all of it. If you look at it in that respect, staying here in Washington and with a compass draw a radius of how far.

MCCLUSKEY: And how many families do we know who are in the United States and doing separated QUOTE tours UNQUOTE, where one is in New York for the weekend and comes home to Washington for the weekend, returns to New York for the week, et cetera? I know friends — I'd have to sit and count how many — it's happening here too, it's not like it's limited to the Foreign Service.

So does the Foreign Service owe us anything? Yes, something's telling me they do. Do they owe us a job? No. Do they owe us housing? Yes, they do. Should they provide our furniture? Yes, I think they do, I do think they owe us that. Why do I think that? Because they've always done.

Q: That's interesting. I'm just the opposite — we always liked to find our own place and take everything with us, and we just preferred that. My husband felt that we learned something in the community by going out and — that's because (she laughs) he always

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sent me out to look for houses; that the landlord who had the house you're liable to rent was very likely to be a key figure in the local government or in business. All of our landlord contacts more or less paid off in one way or another. But I can see the ease of just moving into ...

MCCLUSKEY: And this is a personality thing, too. I know plenty of families who make the same choice.

Q: You're too busy doing other things.

MCCLUSKEY: I'm too busy doing other things and ...

Q: You just want to move in and have the beds there.

MCCLUSKEY: And get the computer plugged in.

Q: And let's get to work.

MCCLUSKEY: Which is a real dilemma. My husband's kind of that way, too, so there's no one in [charge]. He hangs the pictures, "I don't care, just make it look good. 'Fine, looks good, fine, let's go!'" (laughter)

Q: (some talk about need overseas for adapters for 220 volt current when hooking up computers; also remarks about 50 or 60 cycles) I was going to ask you another question: How are the male spouses adapting? There must be a wide variety among the male spouses, too. I'm negotiating with AAFSW [Association of American Foreign Service Women] right now: "Change your name."

MCCLUSKEY: Why haven't they changed their name? It drives me nuts

Q: Yes. "Have a recruitment of male spouses, get your male spouses in there who have legal background, business background; draw on all of those and their discontent to move

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forward vis-a-vis spouse employment, and spouse employment for being a traditional spouse within the Service. How are male spouses adapting?

MCCLUSKEY: (laughing) I have little compassion, I have to say, and for bad reasons. I think they've got it a lot harder than female spouses do, in a lot of ways. I think they've got it a lot easier in some ways too — in ways that mean more to me than some of the others.

Q: In other words, in the job market, work market.

MCCLUSKEY: Yes.

Q: That's exactly what I was seeing.

MCCLUSKEY: Yes, it's true too. I hope you get to talk to some male spouses. I know one who has now left, he would have been a good one because he talked very frankly about all the favors that were done for him. (Fenzi asks her to send names of spouses she comes in contact with)

Well, I think the male spouses have it much harder, and I should be more compassionate than for some reason I am. And I may have the same problem AAFSW might have, that is, that the men have “had it” for so long, and they “get away with” so much, (laughing) “why do we have to do this?” And that's wrong, just plain wrong, on both our parts. Intellectually I'm saying this to you and emotionally I still have no compassion.

But they've got it harder because they have no support group. There's nothing for them to go into. A lot of the American women's associations are just like AAFSW here — they do not let them in. And they don't let them become members.

Q: I think that is so foolish. Am I wrong?

MCCLUSKEY: No, you're absolutely right. For me, the American Women's Association in Vienna was a wonderful resource, I got wonderful friends from it. And I got some great

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contracts from it. So it's a wonderful business and professional resource, as well as a personal one, or it certainly was for me, in Vienna and in Nairobi, both places; in Istanbul not as much, I wasn't as involved there.

If men are excluded from that, and if they stick with their current names, which is mostly “American Women's Club” or “American Women's Association,” of FAWCO for God's sake — “Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas” — it blows my mind they're still called that — similarly, “AAFSW.”

If they keep the same names, even if they allow men to become members, would I want to put on my resume, “Member”?

Q: No, no. Of course not. There is a movement afoot to change AAFSW to “Association of American Foreign Service Families.” I'm against that, because this is a spouse organization. FLO takes care of families and you don't want to dilute it, you want to keep it.

When I came into the Foreign Service — and I'm using you as a sounding board — I was a wife. I then became a spouse. I have maintained that if AAFSW would just declare that everyone who enters the Foreign Service is a “Foreign Service associate” — just give the spouse a title, make her a Foreign Service Associate.” This enables her no matter where she goes in the world to put on her resume “Foreign Service Associate”. And she can list 15 jobs. Some of them will be “paid,” some of them would not, but she could list her highest salary, because she worked as a Foreign Service Associate. As a CLO, as a commissary manager, as a switchboard operator — which I can't imagine anyone wanting to do but it's a job — she could be it sitting around a table in London opening visa envelopes and such — fine. But if you could put all that under one title that sort of gave continuity to what you did at all these posts, I think that anybody would listen to it.

I think that everybody who enters the Foreign Service should become a Foreign Service Auxiliary or a Foreign Service Associate.

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MCCLUSKEY: Not an Auxiliary.

Q: Not Auxiliary, Associate is the word. And AAFSW should change its name, and it should be the Foreign Service Associates, Incorporated. Here is your kit that sends you to CLO overseas, that tells you what job opportunities there are.

MCCLUSKEY: Male spouses do have a hard time because of their lack of personal support, and I do think that's a valid problem that they have. On the other hand, I do know without question that a lot of employment doors are open to them that are not opened up to women. It's the same bias that we face in the United States. It's nothing new, it's the same old stuff. Women collude with us, I found myself even doing this stuff. It's the same old story, and it certainly is overseas. And I know some male spouses who've told me, "yes, that's right, I got some great jobs because — and there's no question that it was in part because I'm a man."

Q: A male spouse told me that the Officers at the Embassy are uncomfortable with an unemployed man, they don't know what to talk to them about at cocktail parties. So it's essentially what you've just said, that they go out of their way to provide the men with jobs.

MCCLUSKEY: That's not good news, but that's fighting a whole culture, that's not just the Foreign Service. Anyway they've got it hard, they don't have a support group to turn to.

Q: And surely they should be part of the spouse support group which is the clubs at many posts.

MCCLUSKEY: And they should feel welcome at some of the FLO functions ...

Q: Yes, of course they should.

MCCLUSKEY: ... that I'm sure they don't go to because to them it feels like something they shouldn't go to for some reason.

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I don't know if we ever got to what I'm doing today? I guess I did say I registered my business here, in Alexandria actually, and I gave myself the title of president only because someone told me I should do that.

Q: President or director — absolutely.

MCCLUSKEY: Anyway I'm president of Global Training Associates. I don't just do cross-cultural training for OBC — I mentioned that — but I do a lot of management training, and I consider that to be one of my strongest areas. I'm now doing diversity training and cross-cultural training, which is more EEO-related — talking about diverse workers in the U.S. and how to manage the growing number of women, the growing number of Asian-Americans and Afro-Americans in the work force.

I'm also doing some communications skills programs — public speaking, business writing — which I love because it brings me back to my writing and researching days which was a lot of fun. Those are the three focuses of my business — the cross-cultural diversity, management, and the communications skills training.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Thomas A. McCluskey

Spouse's Position: Administrative Officer

Spouse Entered Service:1981Left Service: N/AYou Entered Service:SameLeft Service:

Status: Spouse of FSO

Posts: 1982-85Istanbul, Turkey 1985-87Nairobi, Kenya 1987-89New York, NY
1989-91Vienna, Austria 1992-presentWashington, DC

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Place/Date of birth: Niagra Falls, New York; January 1, 1958

Maiden Name: Curnow

Parents (Name, Profession):

Joseph C. Curnow (deceased), butcher

Joan Bauer, housewife

Schools (Prep, University):MBA, International Management/Marketing, US International University (earned degree in Nairobi, 1987); BS, Business Admin/French, Houghton College, NY, 1980; Degr# Annuel, Sorbonne, Paris, (junior year abroad) 1979

Profession: President/Founder of Training Company (management, cross-cultural consulting)

Place/Date of marriage: New York; August 30, 1980

Children:

Meghan Elizabeth, 2 1/2 yrs.

Volunteer and Paid Positions held: A. At Post: Istanbul: Researcher/Writer; CLO Coordinator

Nairobi: Commercial Attach# Assistant; CLO Coordinator

New York: Training Manager and Director/Management Training Program, Manufacturers Hanover Corporation; Training Consultant to: New York University, In-Roads of New York, the National Graduate Compliance School, and other organizations

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Vienna: Training and Writing Consultant (my own business, serving wide variety of business, university, non-profit clients as well as the Embassy); Freelance Writer, Austria Business & Economy Magazine; Adjunct Professor of Human Resource Mgt. at Webster University and at the Vienna School of Tourism; Press Room Manager, FAWCO International Conference; Workshop Coordinator, FAWCO International Conference B. In Washington, DC: 1981-82: Administrative Assistant, C & B Associates (Greek lobbyist/consulting firm)

1991 - Present: President, Global Training Associates Full Service Employee Development and Training company.

Honors (Scholastic, FS):New York State Regents Scholarship and other High School scholarships for high academic record (third highest grades in class). Graduated with high honors.

Houghton College Freshman Scholarship, Houghton Cum Laude graduate.

MBA in International Management and Marketing - 3.85 gpa/4.0.

Promoted in less than a year to Training Manager and Director of Management Training (intern) Program at MHC (1987-89).

Voted runner-up for Teacher of the Year Award at Webster University, Vienna.

Independently broke into Austrian business market, successfully conceptualizing, designing, marketing, and offering relevant training and writing services.

End of interview